

# Multi Use Paths (Tabby Trail) and City of ST Marys

A way to better health, safety, and economic growth

# Introduction (DJR)

- Thanks
- What we want to accomplish this evening:
  - Introduce multi use path (Tabby Trail) to the COSM.
  - Introduce how the Tabby Trail makes access to schools, churches, points of interest (POI) and Greenway easier and safer for bicyclist, walkers and tourist.
  - Depict the benefits that can be derived from the Tabby Trail as well as how the trail can contribute to economic growth.
  - Introduce "Complete Streets".
  - Introduce how COSM can become a Bicycle Friendly Community
  - Introduce type grants that we are working on to make the Tabby Trail a reality.
  - Gain Council approval for staff assistance in developing the required and necessary approval to pursue these important pathways in our city.

# Discussion (TL)

- Terry Landreth using various depictions of path and access points.

# Example of MUP Successful Grant Application

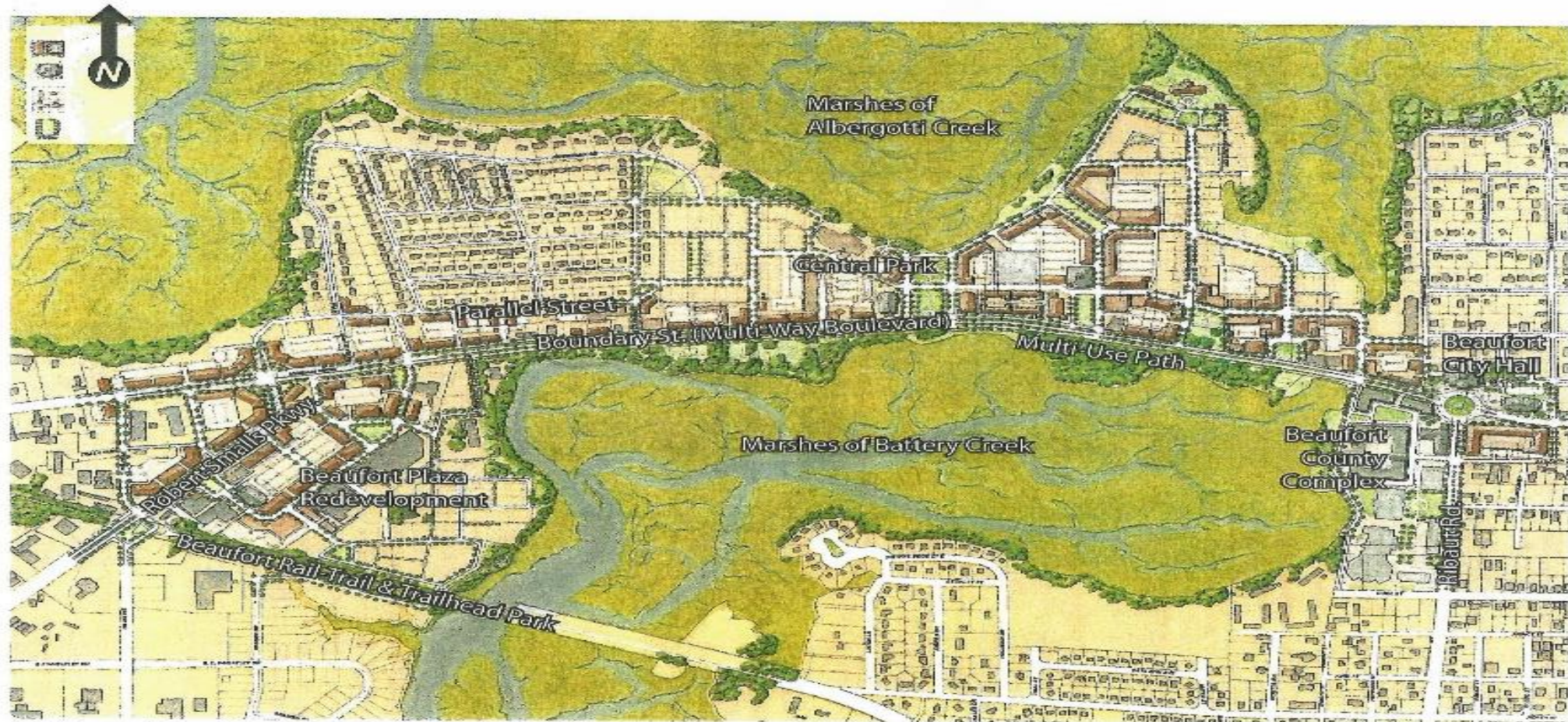


Figure 1.4 - Boundary Street Master Plan



# Tabby Trail Benefits-1

## **QUALITATIVE BENEFITS OF TRAILS**

In addition to the spending generated by the Silver Comet Trail, and the value conferred to the residential locations that are near it, the Silver Comet Trail produces a number of other positive economic benefits to residents, businesses and the State. These benefits tend to be qualitative in nature but are important to include in an overall discussion of benefits and costs.

## **EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

Quality of life decisions, including the availability of recreational amenities like trails, are becoming ever more important factors in where people choose to live and work. The Silver Comet Trail is a valuable asset that boosts the relative attractiveness of the region compared to competing regions and plays an important role in Northwest Georgia's ability to draw and retain talented workers and employers.

## **INCREASED ACCESS AND MOBILITY**

By encouraging and facilitating non-automobile trips, the Silver Comet Trail improves access and mobility. Being able to choose between multiple modes of travel leads to gains for users, as they have more options for their business and leisure travel. It also takes cars off the road, which has at least three positive benefits:

- Reduces air pollution and improves air quality
- Reduces congestion for drivers, saving time and energy consumption
- Reduces wear and tear on roads and vehicles

## **DIRECT USE BENEFITS**

Silver Comet Trail users do not pay directly for their use, but do generate value for themselves. This value is known as a direct use benefit, or "willingness to pay". This ranges from a couple of dollars for leisure walking to significantly more for more intensive activities like trail biking. At a time in which people are seeking no-cost and low-cost leisure options, the value associated with free use of an outdoor amenity is quite high, so the Silver Comet Trail represents a meaningful resource for the State and its residents.

# Tabby Trail Benefits-2

## HEALTH BENEFITS

As health care costs soar, recreational amenities such as the SCT are seen by governments, health professionals, and citizens as an important way to encourage active lifestyles and minimize negative health outcomes.

Physical activity has been shown to lower health care costs in four major categories:

- Direct health care costs: Costs paid for immediate health care needs
- Indirect health care costs: Costs paid for long-term avoidance of chronic negative health outcomes
- Direct and indirect worker compensation costs: Costs paid in worker compensation claims
- Absenteeism and “presentism” costs: Costs paid in loss of workplace productivity from sickness or impaired ability to perform

## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Green space corridors help link fragmented tracts of land to provide larger habitats for wildlife while also protecting sensitive natural features, natural processes, and ecological integrity. These tracts of open space also contribute to cleaner air by preserving stands of plants that create oxygen and filter air pollutants. Vegetation within the green space corridors also creates a buffer to protect streams, rivers, and lakes, preventing soil erosion and filtering pollution caused by agricultural and roadway runoff.

## TRAIL USAGE EVALUATION

To understand the scale of economic impact generated by the Silver Comet Trail, it is important to first know trail users and their activity patterns. The trail usage evaluation count and survey explored four key questions:

1. How many people use the trail and where are they using it most frequently?
2. Who is using the trail?
3. When and how often are people using the trail?
4. Do people spend money in the communities along the trail and if they do, what do they spend their money on?

Key Findings:

- The Silver Comet Trail has an estimated 1.9 million users each year.
- The majority of trail users are bicyclists, particularly in more remote and rural areas. More males use the trail than females along every segment of the trail, though the proportion of female users is higher in more densely populated and well-trafficked areas, such as near downtowns and parks.
- Smyrna Trail Head had the highest estimated annual trail volume.

# Tabby Trail Benefits-3

- 97% of people use the trail either for recreation or exercise, though many people do use the trail for commuting or to access nearby destinations, especially in urban areas.
- People visiting the trail traveled from 23 counties and 8 states, including Washington State, to use the trail (during the two-week survey period).
- When users spend money while using the trail, the majority of them spend money on food and may spend up to \$50 per visit

## **ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS**

This Economic Impact Analysis is the first of its kind to comprehensively report the economic benefits of the existing 61 miles Silver Comet Trail and its proposed 66-mile expansion. Recreational amenities such as rail-trails are increasingly seen as regional economic development tools that generate value through:

- Recreational spending (bicycle rentals, food & drink, sporting equipment)
- Tourism (spending by out-of-state users on lodging, transportation, dining)
- Spillover impacts (additional jobs and worker spending)
- Fiscal impacts (sales tax revenue generated)
- Increased property values (increased household wealth near SCT)
- Property tax revenue (benefitting municipalities and school districts)

## **BENEFIT COST/ANALYSIS**

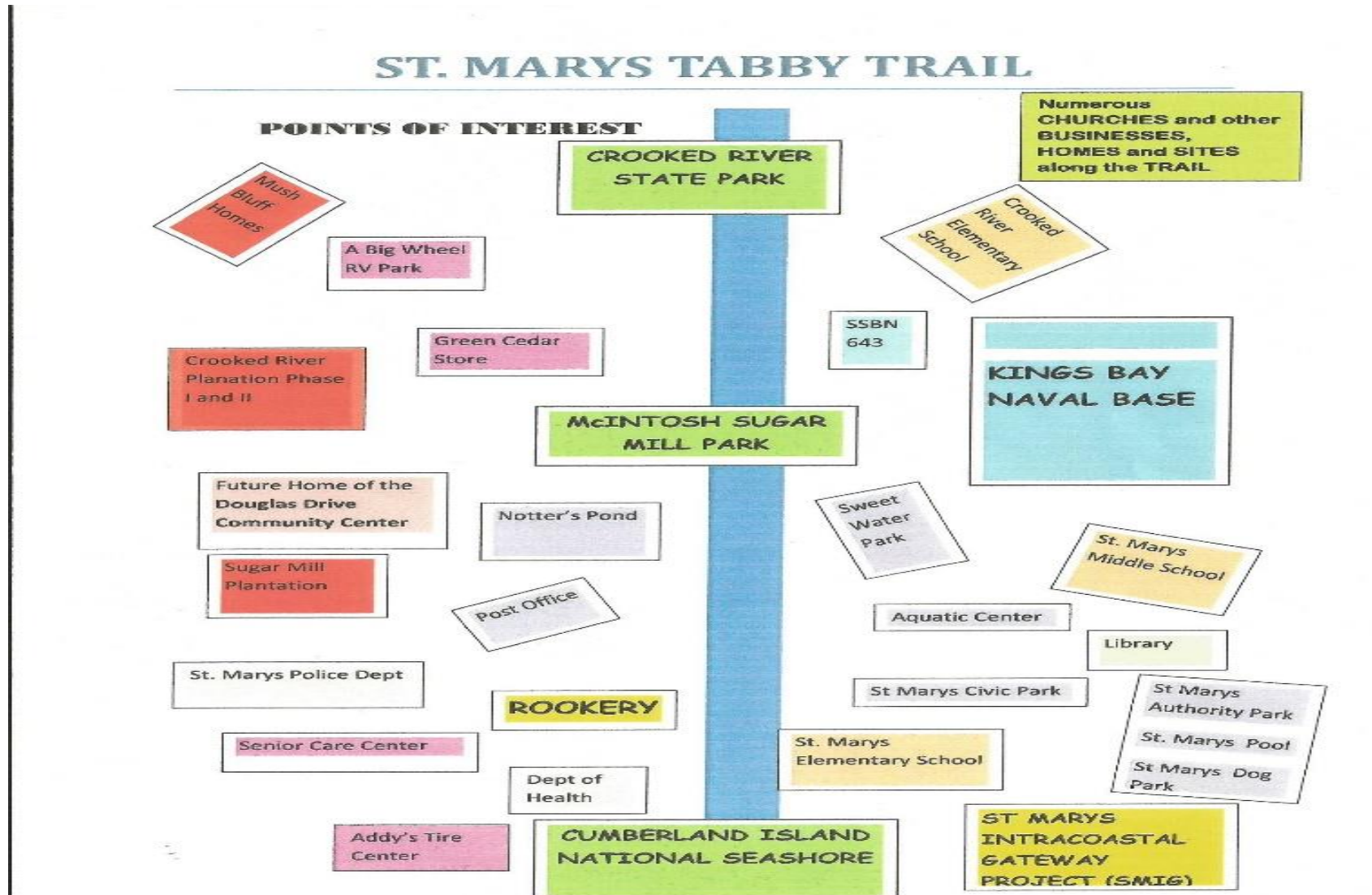
Benefit Valuation of the Silver Comet Trail Expansion: Based on the estimates of the Economic Impact Analysis, the 66-mile trail expansion is conservatively expected to generate a combined economic benefit of \$274 million. This includes local, regional, and statewide benefits: \$24 million more in recreational spending and \$5 million more in tourism spending per year. \$130 million more in property value impact and \$1.7 million in annual property tax revenues to municipalities and school districts

## **RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

The combined cost to construct all recommended trail connections within Georgia is estimated to total \$59 million. An estimate of the return on investment of the Silver Comet Trail expansion can be provided using the results of the existing and proposed economic impact analyses. For every \$1 spent on the Silver Comet Trail expansion, Georgians gain an estimated \$4.64 in direct and indirect economic benefits. This translates to an over 400% return on investment for local communities, the region, and the state.

This information is provided by the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission, Atlanta Regional Commission and Project Consultant Team Alta/Greenway in association with Econsult Solutions, Inc. Robert and Company (<http://www.silvercometga.com/>)

# Tabby Trail Provides Easy & Safe Access





# Summary (DJR)

- This evening we have discussed the proposed Tabby Trail in the COSM including the various access points to important areas of the cities and how this multi-use-path can contribute to the health safety and welfare of all of our citizens. Additionally we have discussed the benefits of the trail as well as some historical data that shows these paths contribute significantly to the economic growth in the areas that install them. We have asked the council to endorse the staff assistance necessary to develop the data and grant applications that will make the installation of these paths a reality in our city.
- Thanks you for your support and encouragement as we continue to develop these concepts and we see multi-use paths become a reality in our city.